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MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

Date: August 24, 1970

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SUBJECT: Attitudes of an MDB Leader

PARTICIPANTS: Oscar PEDROSO HORTA, MDB Federal Deputy
Peter Jon de Vos, Political Officer

DATE: August 19, 1970

PLACE: Mr. Pedroso Horta's Home in Sao Paulo

REF: Brasilia A-46; Sao Paulo 719

BACKGROUND

In addition to being a prominent and highly successful lawyer, Oscar Pedroso Horta is an oldtimer in Sao Paulo political circles. Closely identified with former President Janio QUADROS, he has held a multitude of elected and appointed positions, perhaps achieving the apex of his political career as Minister of Justice during the Quadros regime. Today physically infirm and a chronic alcoholic, nevertheless his mind is as alert as ever and he continues to be a leading spokesman for the opposition. Once again chosen a candidate by the MDB, he privately claims he is undecided whether he will actually run for re-election to the Chamber of Deputies in the November 15 elections.

TORTURE

Deputy Pedroso Horta decried the lack of civil rights which, according to him, has existed in Brazil since the 1964 Revolution; he especially deplored the situation since the suspension of habeas corpus in December 1968, which introduced a period of particularly abhorrent repression. Using contacts formed over many years, the Deputy claimed to have visited Sao Paulo's prisons, police stations and Operacao Bandeirantes (OBAN), where he personally observed the wracked bodies of victims

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who had suffered incredible torture. Allowing that in recent weeks the situation had improved somewhat, he stated that the inexcusable abuses of the past should be punished. In this regard, he and the MDB would continue to bring pressure to bear upon both state and federal officials by repeatedly harping upon "torture cases" such as that of Olavo HANSEN (Brasilia A-46). In the same breath, he admitted he was far from optimistic that such pressure would achieve positive results, but reiterated that the opposition would pursue the fight as long as feasible.

He showed the reporting officer a copy of the official medical report which determined that Hansen's death had resulted from liver damage caused by a poison, although the corpse also exhibited scars and lesions at various points, including the genitals. The Deputy concluded that since there were no traces of poison in the mouth or digestive tract, it must have been introduced intravenously. He also had a copy of a letter written by the parents of Alfredo BERENDMULLER, a doctor said to have been investigating the Hansen case on his own, who had been missing since July 13. The parents state their belief that their son was detained by police authorities and plead for assistance in seeking ^{his} release.

The Deputy said that it would be easy to prove many of the "torture" charges, noting that the bishops at the CNBB Brasilia conference were prepared to prove conclusively 98 such cases, but that the GOB would never permit adequate investigations. He mocked the Brazilian Commission on the Defense of Human Rights, of which he is a member, stating that attempts to discuss concrete cases embarrassing to the GOB were summarily dismissed on the grounds that they were not included on the official agenda, in the preparation of which he had no role.

MDB ELECTORAL PROSPECTS

Deputy Pedroso Horta expressed his delight at what he claimed was ARENA's incredible blunder (Sao Paulo 719 NOTAL) in eliminating incumbent Senator Auro MOURA de ANDRADE as a candidate in the next elections. This development, combined with the existing deep schisms within ARENA, made the MDB's prospects in the coming elections considerably brighter than they might otherwise have been

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with Moura de Andrade in the picture. He said that the MDB could hope to win one and maybe two senate seats, at least a third of the chairs in the Chamber of Deputies and somewhat more than a third in the State Legislative Assembly. The MDB official campaign is to be cloaked by national issues such as the revocation of IA-5, the elimination of censorship and the restoration of habeas corpus, but in fact MDB candidates will attempt to arouse voters by talking of more pertinent "bread and butter" subjects such as the rising cost of living, low wages, the lack of meat in the local market and the dearth of health and educational facilities in the interior towns.

FORMATION OF ADDITIONAL POLITICAL PARTIES

One of the main difficulties of this electoral campaign, commented the Deputy, is the widespread apathy of the electorate, and he predicted a large number of blank or invalidated ballots. Neither of the two parties offers a real alternative, he said, for while ARENA is the government party, the MDB, having no significant leeway in its actions, is not really viewed as an opposition. Both organizations are merely artificial conglomerations of very diverse personalities and neither is based on genuine political ideologies. He applauded the idea of forming additional political parties, although certainly not as many as the thirteen existing prior to the 1964 Revolution; he judged that five would be optimum, allowing for the left, the center-left, the center, the center-right and right to galvanize into separate functioning political entities. He did not believe that the efforts of former Vice President Pedro ALEIXO to form a third party would succeed because of the latter's lack of prestige, but he foresaw the realization of other political parties in the not-too-distant future.

BRAZIL: POOR NATION WITH GRANDIOSE IDEAS

Brazil, said the Deputy, is a very poor nation which unsuccessfully attempts to live like a rich one. Every administration seeks to leave a grandiose memento to itself, and as a result Brazil has squandered vast resources which she simply cannot afford. Given the tremendous amount of capital which went into the construction of Brasilia, he labelled it a great "white elephant" that has contributed nothing to the national well-being or prosperity of the Brazilian people. He condemned outright the Medici government's plans for building the Trans Amazonica

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highway as a waste which would link "the poverty of the Northeast to the misery of the North." Without such absolutely essential services such as agricultural extension and credit, to colonizers, the entire undertaking would have detrimental results for the nation. He likewise was highly critical of the Niteroi Bridge project, which he termed an elegant but unessential luxury.

VIEWS ON US

Throughout the conversation, Deputy Pedroso Horta punctuated his remarks with favorable references to the U.S. Although he had not had a great deal of past contact with Americans, he nevertheless felt that he knew the country from extensive readings and claimed a deep-seated admiration for the U.S. In spite of the nation's many problems, her society and institutions are such that they adapt to the country's changing needs. What especially impressed him was the freedom of expression enjoyed by Americans and the ability of the nation's leaders to cope with the diverse demands placed on them. He also praised the U.S. as the defender of Western Civilization, noting that Brazil's military expenditures were in large part wasteful since it was common knowledge that it was the U.S. whose shielding mantle protected this hemisphere. He stoutly defended the U.S. position on the Viet Nam war issue and said he could not comprehend the violent actions of anti-Viet Nam war protestors. Perhaps it's the "generation gap", he added.

PRESIDENT MEDICI

Deputy Pedroso Horta said that he had met President Medici for the first time when a bi-partisan congressional group recently visited the President to express its solidarity with regard to the kidnapping of the Brazilian Consul Aloysio GOMIDE. Predisposed never to consort with the executive branch of government because of his role as a leader of the opposition, he said that he had been swayed in this instance by severe pressure from the MDB membership for him to participate in the meeting. He was appalled by the President's physical appearance but thoroughly charmed by Medici's demeanor. The President was evidently a compassionate man, who after making several emotional comments on the burdens of office, left the meeting quickly with tears of appreciation in his eyes.

The Deputy concluded by stating that he prayed nightly for the good health of President Medici, who for the MDB was the least of evils, given the present system. What Pedroso Horta and others among the

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opposition dreaded most was Medici's demise and the ascension of either an unknown, totally authoritarian dictator or an equally unacceptable "nationalistic type" like General ALBUQUERQUE LIMA.

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